

82. (New) The system of claim 60, wherein the provider tracker module is configured to automatically distribute reports received from the report tracker module to the appropriate provider's directory.
83. (New) The system of claim 60, wherein the administrative tracker module is configured to maintain an administrator mailbox for receiving e-mails of pertinent communications sent by other employees.

REMARKS

Claims 60-83 are pending in the present application; claim 60 is the sole independent claim. Applicant has replaced the previously pending claims with new claims to better present the invention to the Examiner.

In order to fully appreciate the nature and value of the present invention, one must understand the current financial crisis in the medical profession. This crisis stems from increasing administrative overhead coupled with declining medical fees.

The increase in administrative overhead can be traced to the increasing share of medical bills paid by third-party payers, such as insurance companies and the government. This is a consequence of patients' overusing medical resources that appear nearly free to them, in addition to producers of medical equipment creating new and more expensive devices, which may only provide marginal benefits, since a guaranteed market is created by the third-party payers. The deluge of paperwork required to process these payments leads to the increase in the single largest expense in a medical office -- personnel.

The decrease in medical fees can be traced to the reality that many doctors now spend an average of two to three hours a day on tasks for which they are not traditionally compensated, such as returning phone calls and filling out insurance forms. This reduces the number of patients a doctor can see in a day, resulting in less revenue. This reality, coupled with rising malpractice premiums and the stagnation of reimbursements from the insurance companies and the government, causes some doctors to either to leave the profession altogether, or charge

patients for such things as photocopies of medical records and responding to phone calls and e-mails.

The present invention fully addresses the causes behind this financial crisis by automating the labor-intensive tasks that relate to the overall administration of a medical office -- tasks which account for a substantial portion of the administrative workload in a typical medical practice. Some medical offices that have employed a system according to the present invention have experienced an over fifty percent reduction in FTE (full-time equivalent) hours, while greatly reducing the amount of the work day that a provider must spend on administrative tasks.

None of the prior art cited by the Examiner teaches or suggests the entire informatic system that automates clerical functions across multiple departments within a medical business office as recited in the pending claims. In fact, a benefit of the present invention is that the narrowly-focused solutions of the prior art could be integrated into a system according to the present invention in order to achieve complete medical office automation.

Applicant therefore respectfully submits that each of the pending claims is patentably distinguishable over the prior art of record, and respectfully requests early notice to that effect.

CONCLUSION

It is respectfully submitted that, in view of the foregoing remarks, the application is in clear condition for allowance. Issuance of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by this Preliminary Amendment (RCE). The attached page is captioned "**VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE.**"

The Office is authorized to charge the three-month small entity extension of time fee of \$465.00 to Deposit Account No. 11-0600. Although not believed necessary, the Office is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or § 1.17 or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 11-0600.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at 202-220-4200 to discuss any matter regarding this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims:

Previously pending claims (claims 43-59) have been canceled without prejudice or waiver as to the underlying subject matter.

Claims 60-83 have been added.